

MINUTES

Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Thursday August 15th, 2019
Location: Belle Isle Nature Center

Meeting called to order at 6:02 p.m.
No Quorum
A Quorum was established at 6:40 p.m.

EXCUSED ABSENCES

Bud Denker

PRESENT FOR BIPAC

Chair Michele Hodges
Michael Curis
Rev. Lonnie Peek
Bryan Barnhill

DNR STAFF PRESENT

Michael Terrell
Karis Floyd
Darlisa Rickman

REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of Minutes for July 18th, 2019:

An amendment has to be made to the minutes for July 18th

Motion to approve excused absence for Bud Denker:

Moved by: Rev. Lonnie Peek

Seconded by: Michael Curis

General Updates

Karis Floyd, DNR

- Karis introduced new Rangers Kewan Glenn and Shaun Cabral.
- One of the tractors caught fire. There were no injuries and we are unaware of the cause. Working towards getting a replacement.
- Amanda Treadwell has been working on putting in a coffer dam to combat the flooding on the island. We are hoping we will see 4-5 inches of water go down.
- Hoping to open the Strand to traffic in about 2 weeks.

- The areas that were underwater are not cleared up just yet.
- There is still work being done on the bridge but once that's done there will be access to the Strand all the way around.

DNR Law Enforcement Update

Lt. Todd Szyska, DNR

Lt. Andrea Barber, MSP

- With the flooding on the island parking is still an issue.
- Speeding continues to be an issue on the island, so we have been giving out tickets.
- We had some reports of alleged suicides on the Belle Isle Bridge but thankfully it turned out to be a false alarm.
- Gearing up for the marathon. For now it looks like the water will not impede the run.

Infrastructure Updates

Amanda Treadwell (See attachment)

Outreach and Upcoming Events

Darlisa Rickman

- Since the last meeting, our office continues working with groups to cancel or relocate events/shelters impacted by the flooding.
- In addition, we still have our regular activities: booking events/weddings, issuing permits, dissemination information on events, the venues on the park, etc.
- To date, we have cancelled 5 special events (i.e. walks/runs), cancelled 61 shelter reservations and relocated 50 events located at shelters.
- A hold was put on additional (weekend) requests for photoshoots, event, picnics, etc. due to the fact we didn't want to cause more problems with traffic and overcapacity situations.
- Even though we've cancelled quite a few things, we still have tons of activities throughout the park and at our designated wedding locations including the Casino and the Flynn.
- As it relates to upcoming events there are walks, runs and triathlons scheduled for every Saturday and Sunday through the end of October.
- This month is the last month for the music concerts at Sunset Point - Music on Belle Isle (MOBIG). The dates and times are as follows:
8/18/19, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., Five Lakes Silver Band
8/25/19, 6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., Birmingham Concert Band
Admission is free for the two events however, donations are accepted. The proceeds will help pay for a feasibility study for the Band Shell.

Presentation by the YMCA

Helene Weir, President and CEO

Rheanne Suszek, Boll Family Facility Executive Director

An overview was given of the partnership between Belle Isle and the YMCA and the activities offered at their facilities, particularly the Boll Family Branch located at 1401 Broadway St., Detroit, Michigan 48226. For schedules of activity and more information call (313)309-9622.

Belle Isle Conservancy Update

Chair Michelle Hodges

- Sept. 10th Garden Party at the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory.
- The Polish the Jewel Luncheon October 10th will aid in funding the Splash Park hosted at the Yacht Club.
- 115th Birthday for the Aquarium and the Conservatory celebration on Sunday.
- On Friday, and likely through the end of September, exhibit highlighting the impact that micro plastics are having on the great lakes. There will also be a water bottle giveaway for those that complete the scavenger hunt that will be Friday from 10-4.
- The Keep Belle Isle Beautiful Initiative continues.

PUBLIC COMMENTS (3 minutes each)

Michael Betzold

Would like to thank the DNR staff for all that they have done this summer during a trying time. The Belle Isle Grand Prix stymies and offends regular park users and blocks access to this island every spring. Three people on this committee have the power to pull the plug on this event. Why won't they? Two of them would be honoring their organizations' own stated missions and exercising responsible public stewardship if they refused to accept any extensions of the Grand Prix contract beyond 2021. Ron Olson has denied requests to have a third-party independent environmental impact study of the race-which would seem to be the minimum needed to approve such an event in such a fragile and valuable habitat as Belle Isle. Instead, his DNR approved a new contract. So now he owns responsibility for the race. But before he retires, he could stop the contract from being extended. He could also make clear that Auto Show events are not appropriate uses of the park. What exactly is stopping you, Mr. Olson from doing the right thing? Michele Hodges could honor the stewardship mission of the Belle Isle Conservancy and turn the organization's attention to making the Oudolf Garden a huge success. She could work with grant writers to replace the money from the Grand Prixmiere that goes into her budget and helps the conservancy pay her well over \$150,000 a year. She could also oppose Auto Show events as misuse of a public park - instead of dreaming about restaging old car commercials here. What's stopping her? Perhaps her own self-interest? And if neither of these public stewards has the courage to do what's right, maybe Bud Denker could convince his boss that the continued occupation of Belle Isle is ruining his reputation – no matter how many awards he gets from Donald Trump. Roger Penske could still throw a fundraiser for Belle Isle if he worked with civic leaders to move his race to another

location. And by doing so get a massive public relations boost. Isn't that the kind of advice a loyal employee should give his boss? As a bonus, if any of you stopped the race, you wouldn't have to keep listening to me haranguing you every month!

Patty Fedewa

Thinks a relationship with MOGO would be very beneficial. The Athletic Field needs to be improved. The Grand Prix does not clean up its mess. We need less concrete out here and people don't come to this park to see the Grand Prix. We want to use it for recreational purposes.

Skip Davis

Against the Grand Prix and the Auto Show being held on Belle Isle Park. It has been over 3 years that the current panel has been on the committee; that's a long time. The trust of the park users and your own mission statement has been violated. You have refused to do a third-party environmental impact study on the flora and fauna and the impact the race has on the island. Roger Penske's Grand Prix is the biggest problem on Belle Isle.

J.W. Mitchell

Would like clarification on the Lake Okonoka Project and how it affected the water level and other projects on the island.

Angela Lugo-Thomas

Against use of Belle Isle Park by the Grand Prix or possible Auto Show use in 2020. Belle Isle needs to be protected from uses that are not compatible with its intended purpose of being a park. Many of us have made comments and asked questions during many meetings but they are rarely, if ever answered. Is there someone who could start addressing and answering our questions/comments? Thank you to the DNR staff for everything they are doing to keep Belle Isle going for all of us to enjoy. If you give employee recognition, please recognize Darlisa Rickman and the Administrative team for the work that they do. Thank you to Michael Curis for providing food for tonight's meeting. What a nice thing to do! In regard to the YMCA presentation: How are parents in the local community reached to know about the opportunity for the camp experience described? Sounds like a great camp experience.

Carol Rhoades

Some of the ruts from the Grand Prix are still on the Cricket field. Many uneven areas of ground at the Art Fair and it needs to be leveled. The Conservatory staff does not have a complete list of weddings; the staff needs to have a written list sent to volunteers of all weddings at the conservatory!!

Karis Floyd responded that the ruts in the cricket field have been repaired.

COMMITTEE MEMBER ITEMS

Michael Curis

Does not want anyone that comes to the meetings to feel like they are not heard. We have to take a vote when it comes to issues and we are also conflicted when it comes to making these decisions as well. If its 75 percent good and 25 percent bad, then we vote for it but know that it is never a 100 percent thing. We have to weigh the good against the bad.

Bryan Barnhill

We respect that people come here regularly to be heard and participate. My perspective is from being a Detroiters that lives in the city, grew up on the Eastside. On one hand I'm extremely grateful that the state is managing the island and that the Grand Prix has created an attraction and provided some funding to benefit the park. But at the same time, I can sympathize with folks that disagree. I frequent the island and so do my children. Being on this committee is an exercise in trying to stretch your mind to step into someone else's shoes and put yourself in a position to be criticized. We all have a different perspective of what is right and what is ideal. It's always best to keep that in mind.

Motion to Adjourn:

Moved by: Michael Curis

Seconded by: Rev. Lonnie Peek

Meeting Concluded: 7:23 p.m.

NEXT REGULAR MEETING:

September 19, 2019

Belle Isle Nature Center

Belle Isle Park

Detroit, MI 48207

9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Approved: _____
Michele Hodges

Ronald A. Olson, Chief

Date: _____